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ABSTRACT

This document reports the results of a study undertaken to determine if teaching a 2-week unit on library usage to 7th graders would increase their use of the library. From three non-ability grouped 7th grade classes, two classes of 26 students each were randomly selected for the study. One class was randomly assigned as the experimental group and the other was designated as the control group. The experimental group was taught how to care for a book; the different parts of a book and their usefulness; the student's responsibilities when he/she checks out materials from the library; how to use reference materials, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, the vertical file, newspapers, magazines, the "Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature," and nonfiction books; and how to use the card catalog. These students were given drills and practice exercises but they were not tested on the skills taught. The control group was not taught library methods and skills. They continued going to their regular English class. Teachers of both groups were asked to make assignments that would require use of the library. A frequency court kept on both groups for six weeks after the unit was taught indicated that teaching the 2-week unit significantly increased the total usage of the library, with the experimental group using the library significantly more than the control group. The greatest gains were achieved in the areas of encyclopedias, the vertical file, the "Reader's Guide," and usage during a free study period outside of library time. (THC)

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EFFECTS OF TEACHING A LIBRARY USAGE UNIT TO SEVENTH GRADERS

by

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Paper Presented at
MSERA 1984

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Effects of Teaching a
Library Usage Unit to Seventh Graders

For the past five years, a unit on how to use the library has been taught to seventh graders at Maben High School. No empirical evidence as to the value of the unit had ever been obtained. A search of the literature also revealed no comparative studies to prove the teaching of library methods increased the use or ease of use of the public school library.

Therefore, the problem of this study was to determine if the teaching of a two-week unit on library usage would increase the use of the library.

To structure the study, two operational null hypotheses were stated:

A. There will be no significant difference in the number of times an experimental group of seventh grade students who have had a two-week library skills unit use the library and the number of times a control group who have not had the two-week skills unit use the library.

B. There will be no significant difference in the amount of help requested by the experimental and control groups during the following six week period.

Methods

From three non-ability grouped seventh grade classes, two classes were randomly selected for the study. One was randomly assigned as the experimental group and one was designated as the control group. Each group had twenty-six students.

The experimental group met in the library everyday for two weeks. An orientation was given the first day to show students around the library and to familiarize them with the library's environment. The experimental group was taught the following: how to care for a book,

such as how to open a book correctly, how to take a book from the shelf and replace it correctly, and how to turn the pages of a book correctly; the different parts of the book and it's usefulness; the student's responsibilities when he/she checks out materials from the library; how to use reference materials, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, the vertical file, newspapers, magazines, the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, and non-fiction books; and, how to use the card catalog. The students were given drills and practices in using all the skills taught. A test was not given. Teachers of the experimental group were asked to make assignments that would require the use of the library.

The control group was not taught library methods and skills. They continued going to their regular English class. The teachers (in all subject areas) of the control group were also asked to make assignments that would require the use of the library.

A frequency count was kept for each period of the day on the experimental and control groups for six weeks after the library unit was taught to determine how many times they used materials in the following areas and how many times they requested help in using the materials:

Fiction	Magazines	Reader's Guide
Non-Fiction	Newspapers	Free Study Period
Encyclopedias	Vertical File	
Dictionaries	Card Catalog	

Discussion

Analysis of Table 1 shows significant differences. The experimental group used the library significantly more (.01) in the following areas: encyclopedias, the vertical file, the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, and during free study periods. Control group students used the library significantly more (.05) reading magazines and newspapers. No significant difference was found in library usage in the areas of

fiction, non-fiction, and use of dictionaries. Total figures for the two groups showed the experimental group used the library significantly more than the control group. Hypothesis No. 1 was therefore rejected for the total comparison and the six subtests as shown in Table I.

Table II shows the number of times each group requested assistance in their use of the library. Experimental students requested assistance 15 times as compared to 51 times for the control group. This was a significant difference (.01) in favor of the experimental group. Although experimental students used the library more, control group students asked for help a significantly larger number of times. Hypothesis No. 2 was therefore rejected.

Summary

Results of this study indicate that teaching a two-week unit on library usage did significantly increase the total usage of the library. The greatest gains were achieved in the areas of encyclopedias, the vertical file, the Reader's Guide, and usage during a free study period outside of library time. This indicates an awareness of the value of the library in some of the more academic areas. Gains in these areas were in favor of the experimental group. Magazines and newspapers were used significantly more by the control group. These two areas seem to be more non-academic in nature.

TABLE I

LIBRARY USAGE IN NUMBER OF TIMES LIBRARY USED

	Experimental Group N 26	Control Group N 26	X^2	Decision
Fiction	44	48	.16	Nonsignificant
Non-fiction	46	48	.04	Nonsignificant
Encyclopedias	195	27	124.14	.01
Dictionaries	11	9	.20	Nonsignificant
Magazines	7	13	6.00	.05
Reader's Guide	47	15	16.50	.01
Newspapers	18	34	4.92	.05
Vertical File	42	0	42.00	.01
Card Catalog	15	25	2.50	Nonsignificant
Study Period	48	16	16.00	.01
Total	498	260	81.58	.01

Necessary X^2, .05 3.84, 1df

Necessary X^2, .01 6.64, 1df

TABLE II

AMOUNT OF HELP REQUESTED

	Experimental Group	Control Group	X^2	Decision
Total Requests	15	51	19.63	.01

Necessary X^2, .01 6.64, 1df